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SENIOR REVIEW GROUP MEETING MR 01-47, #3; NSC 44 7/20/01

Tuesday, September 15, 1970

By dal NARA, Date 9/13/01

Time and Place: 4:12 - 5:00 p.m., White House Situation Room.

Subject: Short-Term Cambodia Strategy (NSSM 99)

Participation:

Chairman - Dr. Henry A. Kissinger	JCS	- Adm. Thomas H. Moorer B/Gen. Robert Lukeman
State - Mr. U. Alexis Johnson Mr. Marshall Green Mr. Arthur Hartman	NSC Staff - Dr. K. Wayne Smith Mr. John H. Holdridge Col. Richard T. Kennedy Capt. Robert Sansom Mr. D. Keith Guthrie	
Defense - Mr. David Packard Vice Adm. William Flanagan		
CIA - Mr. Richard Helms Mr. George Carver	OMB	- Mr. James R. Schlesinger

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. The SRG agreed that from a military standpoint, Strategy 3, Variant 3, as outlined in the VSSG Working Paper, states the preferred objective, which is to maintain the Cambodian Government in control of the half of the country that includes the capital, populated areas, and port. The SRG also agreed that in seeking to achieve this objective, the US should aim at building up the capabilities of the Cambodian forces so as to minimize the need for significant long-term intervention by the ARVN. The SRG noted that the requirement for involvement of South Vietnamese forces in the defense of Cambodia should decline as the capabilities of the Cambodian forces improve.
2. To provide a fuller analysis of the implications of the strategic objectives outlined in Paragraph 1, the NSC Staff will prepare in chart form an analysis covering the next six months which relates the expected increase in Cambodian military capabilities, the likely levels of NVA/VC reinforcements in Cambodia, and the requirements for employment of South Vietnamese forces in the defense of Cambodia. CIA will assist in assessing prospective NVA/VC reinforcement levels, and JCS will provide data on prospects for the improvement of Cambodian military capabilities.
3. State and OMB will prepare a study on means to fund a Cambodian

assistance program at the current level pending passage of a supplemental appropriation or in default of passage of such an appropriation. The study should also define the amount which should be requested to support the objectives referred to in Paragraph 1 if it is decided to seek a supplemental appropriation early in CY71.

4. The SRG endorsed the suggestion that the Secretary of Defense provide the President his views on why he believes it would be possible to obtain a supplemental appropriation for military assistance to Cambodia prior to the adjournment of Congress on October 23.

Dr. Kissinger: This is an excellent paper on short-range Cambodian strategy. I want to express my appreciation for the help of all the departments that participated in preparing it.

I believe the first item on our agenda should be the various strategies outlined in the paper. These strategies raise a number of issues. Which one we choose depends on how important Cambodia is to us, how great a commitment of South Vietnamese resources is required to assist Cambodia, and how much the economic and military assistance programs we might provide to Cambodia would cost.

Four strategies are discussed in the paper. As I understand it, Strategies 1 and 2 both are based on the premise that Cambodia is not essential to the success of Vietnamization. One problem is that the President believes the opposite.

Strategy 1 would preclude South Vietnamese defense of the Cambodian Government. The US would provide no additional military assistance beyond the \$40 million already allocated but would make available \$45 million in economic aid. Is that a fair description of the strategy?

Mr. Packard: Strategy 1 is an economy-driven strategy. It is what we can do with the money we have available.

Dr. Kissinger: Alex (Johnson) has a chart that shows that there are more funds available than we had previously thought.

Mr. Johnson: The chart represents the results of a concentrated effort to identify all possible sources of funds which we might use in Cambodia. It might be called Operation Scrounge.

Dr. Kissinger: Is Strategy 1 based on the assumption that we would provide no more than \$40 million in military assistance?

Mr. Packard: Yes. Depending on how the situation develops, we might have to look at other sources of funding even if we stick to Strategy 1.

Mr. Johnson: At the present rate of expenditure the \$40 million will run out at the end of this year.

Adm. Moorer: That's right.

Mr. Packard: If we don't get a supplemental right away, we won't be able to get one before February 1971. Thus, we can't talk about any strategy other than Strategy 1 unless we decide to go for a supplemental now.

Dr. Kissinger: Is Strategy 1 within our present funding availabilities?

Mr. Packard: We might run out of funds even with Strategy 1. Then we would have to resort to Operation Scrounge.

Dr. Kissinger: Strategy 1 seems to be one which we have no choice but to implement but which no one recommends. There is no reason to discuss it on its merits. Is that correct?

Mr. Packard: Yes.

Dr. Kissinger: Does everyone agree that the other three strategies are worth discussing on their merits?

All agreed.

Dr. Kissinger: Let's discuss the question of a supplemental now. (to Packard) Secretary Laird's judgment, as I understand it, is that we should go for a supplemental appropriation for Cambodia now. The President has said he doesn't want to seek a supplemental during the election period. I believe that if we put the question in the abstract to the Secretary of State, he would agree with the President.

Mr. Johnson: That's correct.

Dr. Kissinger: When the Secretary called me five minutes ago, he mentioned in the course of the conversation that he didn't want to stir up any public discussion of Vietnam at this time.

Mr. Johnson: That is his view. Congress adjourns on October 23. To request a supplemental means we would be seeking both an authorization and an appropriation before that date. Dave Abshire believes that it is inconceivable that we could achieve this.

Mr. Packard: Mel Laird's position is that things are going pretty well now in Southeast Asia. The Cambodia issue has settled down. There is a very good chance that communist infiltration will increase later this fall, and the situation will look worse. Yet without a supplemental we can't possibly do anything other than Strategy 1 before next February.

Dr. Kissinger: If we try for a supplemental and fail to get it through by October 23, we will be in that kind of a box anyway. Only there will be a lot of talk about our getting deeper and deeper into Cambodia. If, as a result of the elections, we get a few more Senators on our side, the prospects for a supplemental might be better. If we don't, we won't be any worse off in Congress than at present. If we can't get a supplemental before October 23, it isn't worth making the effort.

I think if Mel Laird could convince the President that it is possible to obtain a supplemental before October 23, we might have a new situation.

Mr. Packard: The thing to do is to have Mel talk to the President about this. There is another issue we need to consider. Can the Cambodians hold together that long if we adopt Strategy 1?

Adm. Moorer: That is very important. Infiltration is likely to increase after Christmas. An enemy move, if it comes, will occur then.

Mr. Johnson: The hard judgment is whether we spend at a rate of \$40 million per annum on the assumption that no more funds will be forthcoming and that we should start winding down. Or do we figure on spending \$40 million over a period of six months in the expectation that we will be able to obtain more funds?

Mr. Packard: That is really no issue. Only \$9 million of the \$40 million is still unspent.

Dr. Kissinger: How about Operation Scrounge?

Mr. Schlesinger: There are a number of other alternative sources of funds. The Cambodian Government has fairly sizeable reserves. If they were willing to use these, we could replenish them. We could also provide supporting assistance, or we might arrange a Section 506 drawdown on Defense stocks.

Dr. Kissinger: I am confident the President won't want to spend at a rate of \$40 million per year if that means winding down.

Adm. Moorer: There would be a terrific letdown if we failed to carry through on the training programs for the FANK that are now in progress.

Dr. Kissinger: A paper ought to be put together that makes the case for a

supplemental but points out that we probably cannot obtain one. (to Johnson) Does Dave Abshire believe that we can't get a supplemental even with optimal receptivity on the Hill?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Dr. Kissinger: Then we are forced to rely on Operation Scrounge. Of course, we might get a one-month lead on obtaining a supplemental if we went ahead and proposed one this fall.

Mr. Johnson: We wouldn't gain anything. A supplemental introduced this fall would not carry over next January, since there will be a new Congress then.

Mr. Packard: After all the ruckus on the Hill, we came out pretty well on the Defense bill. You would have everything going for you now.

Mr. Johnson: The problem is that you have to translate this feeling to the Foreign Relations Committee.

Dr. Kissinger: Do we have to deal with them?

Mr. Johnson: Yes, they have jurisdiction on foreign assistance.

Dr. Kissinger: That makes it difficult.

Mr. Packard: At the very least we would have to get some member of the Foreign Relations Committee to go to bat for us.

Dr. Kissinger: This whole issue requires that the Secretary of Defense explain to the President why he thinks a supplemental can go through by October 23. (to Packard) Can you get the Secretary to telephone or write a memorandum explaining his position?

Mr. Packard: That is exactly what ought to be done. Of course, the Secretary already sent the President a memo on this.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, but that memo just says why a supplemental is necessary. It doesn't explain why Laird thinks a supplemental will pass.

Mr. Packard: Unless we get something going right away, we will be caught with our pants at half-mast in December.

Dr. Kissinger: To provide an alternative we should get a paper from Johnson and Schlesinger explaining how, if we fail to get a supplemental, we can keep going at

least at the present level using non-obvious methods. The President can look at that paper before making a decision.

Is this all we need to say about Strategy 1?

Mr. Packard: We ought to discuss the military risks.

Dr. Kissinger: Strategy 1 reduces present efforts.

Mr. Packard: An explanation of the military risks will help the President in making a decision.

Dr. Kissinger: All right, let's have a paper on the military risks.

Dr. Smith: These are spelled out in the NSSM 99 paper.

Dr. Kissinger: Then the material can be drawn from the NSSM 99 paper. Now let's discuss Strategy 2. This involves \$100 million in US economic and military assistance to Cambodia. Isn't that about what we are doing now?

Mr. Green: Our present effort is somewhere between Strategies 1 and 2.

Adm. Moorer: No, it is closer to Strategy 3.

Mr. Packard: It is like Variant 3 of Strategy 3.

Mr. Green: Not in terms of expenditures.

Mr. Packard: I mean in terms of objectives.

Adm. Moorer: There is no direct relationship between area, strategies, and money. Our objective from the beginning has been to hold the populated areas below Highways 5 and 6. In the NSSM 99 paper Wayne Smith is talking about the minimum area you can hold with these forces. It is possible that we could hold more territory.

Dr. Kissinger: Is Strategy 2 the optimum that can be achieved with present Cambodian forces?

Adm. Moorer: No, Strategy 2 includes some rather heavy equipment.

Vice Adm. Flanagan: Strategy 2 has a political orientation; it is designed to keep the ARVN and the Cambodian government apart.

Mr. Johnson: That's right.

Mr. Green: But if the ARVN were needed, it could be brought in.

Dr. Kissinger: Can we get enough Cambodian personnel to carry out Strategy 2?

Adm. Moorer: We have got the bodies. The heavy equipment poses problems. It is difficult to arrange delivery and to get the Cambodians trained to use the equipment. What we are now doing is equivalent to a low level Strategy 3.

Dr. Kissinger: (to Helms) What is your estimate of the North Vietnamese strategy? Are they likely to make a major effort in the dry season?

Mr. Helms: Yes, they are.

Mr. Johnson: The question is whether the enemy effort would be focused on Cambodia or South Vietnam.

Mr. Packard: There is no chance that we could get the Cambodian forces equipped and trained in time. If the enemy concentrates their efforts in Cambodia, we can divert forces from Vietnam.

Dr. Kissinger: Will there be effective units available in Cambodia by January or February?

Adm. Moorer: We're training a number of companies in Vietnam. Eighty companies have just completed their training. In my view the fastest way to build up the Cambodian army is to give them light arms. We can't teach them to use howitzers and armored vehicles before next summer.

Dr. Kissinger: As an objective, I find it a good idea to try to separate the South Vietnamese and Cambodian efforts. The question is whether this can be achieved in the crunch period. (to Moorer) You think we would not be able to do this before next summer?

Adm. Moorer: Yes.

Mr. Packard: It is possible that Cambodian forces equipped with light weapons can do an effective job. Providing them with light weapons is the least we can do. If they get into trouble, the only way to back them up is to use South Vietnamese forces.

Mr. Johnson: What we want to do is help the Cambodians defend themselves within the limits of their absorptive capability and with weapons that they can use. To the degree that they can do this, we will have to decide how much we wish to involve the ARVN. These latter decisions will be the difficult ones.

Mr. Packard: From the standpoint of defining our objectives we can't go much below Strategy 3, Variant 3. We need to hold the areas covered by Strategy 3.

Adm. Moorer: Yes, we should maintain control of the capital, the inhabited areas, and the access routes to the sea.

Mr. Packard: To hold anything less would be ridiculous.

Dr. Kissinger: Then there are two different problems. First, we have to determine which forces are employed to carry out each of the strategies. Second, we need to relate the strategies to given time periods. I take it there is no objection to following Strategy 2 next fall. Everyone agrees that Strategy 3, Variant 3 is the desirable one from a military standpoint. There are differences about when it might be possible to carry out each of the strategies.

Mr. Johnson: The essential minimum is to deny the enemy the port and the capital.

Mr. Packard: That's right.

Dr. Kissinger: What is the difference in Strategies 1, 2, and 3 in terms of the Vietnamese forces that would be required during the January-March period?

Adm. Moorer: Under Strategy 2 no ARVN forces would be used to hold territory in Cambodia. However, it is important to remember that we will have to adjust our strategy depending on the way the situation unfolds.

Mr. Green: We agree with that. We wouldn't want to rule out the intensive use of South Vietnamese forces under some circumstances.

Dr. Kissinger: The differences between Strategies 1 and 2 amounts to 5 ARVN battalions. Between Strategies 2 and 3 the difference is another 9 battalions. (to Sansom) Does this assume that North Vietnamese forces will be at present levels?

Capt. Sansom: Yes.

Dr. Kissinger: If we accept Strategy 3, we might be forced back to Strategy 2 if the North Vietnamese send in reinforcements.

Capt. Sansom: That's right.

Mr. Johnson: Does the Working Group estimate that with present Cambodian capabilities and present North Vietnamese strength the Cambodians would not be able to implement Variant 3 of Strategy 3?

Capt. Sansom: Yes.

Mr. Johnson: Why?

Capt. Sansom: The best evidence is to look at what has been done toward opening Route 6 north of Tang Kouk. So far the FANK hasn't been able to achieve this.

Mr. Green: Nevertheless Strategy 3 might work. It is conceivable that the Cambodians might be able to do it. What we want to do is to use Cambodian forces to the maximum extent possible.

Dr. Kissinger: We need to get a chart that is not static and that looks at foreseeable levels of North Vietnamese reinforcement and maps these against Cambodian capabilities as they are expected to develop over time. The need for South Vietnamese involvement ought to decline during 1970 and 1971. We might begin in January with a level of South Vietnamese involvement equivalent to Variant 3 of Strategy 3. The requirement for South Vietnamese assistance might become much lower as the year progressed. A flow chart would help show where we can be at various points next year.

With regard to the funding question, if we accept Marshall Green's theory that we should use Cambodian forces to the maximum extent possible, we ought to provide more support to the Cambodians. If the Cambodians can't hack it, the situation may collapse. But if the Cambodians can't hack it and the South Vietnamese come in, the collapse will be compounded.

Mr. Green: There is also the question of complications here in the States. Senator Stennis says we can't employ South Vietnamese forces too far away from their home base.

Mr. Johnson: South Vietnamese forces are a necessary evil if the FANK cannot hold out.

Adm. Moorer: The objective of Strategy 3 is to help the Cambodian Government expand its influence out of the cities and maintain control of the populated rural areas. The idea would be to keep the enemy from developing an infrastructure in these areas. For Variant 3, which would cover the largest area of the country, the study gives a figure of \$123 million in add-on costs. If the Cambodians acquire this capability, there would be less need for South Vietnamese forces.

Dr. Kissinger: One is almost drawn to the conclusion that we should aim for Variant 3 in terms of expenditures. The problem is where do we get the money.

Mr. Packard: We will need a supplemental plus some devious procedures.

Dr. Kissinger: We need to get some figures.

Capt. Sansom: The Working Group concluded that Variant 2 of Strategy 3 could be attempted without a supplemental but that it would involve much budgetary strain.

Adm. Moorer: This depends in part on the timing.

Capt. Sansom: The assumption was that we would go for a supplemental next year.

Dr. Kissinger: This mean that we would keep going at the present rate and use a supplemental to restore the situation.

Mr. Packard: Then we will need to get ARVN assistance this fall.

Mr. Johnson: That will be the tough decision.

Dr. Kissinger: Does the ARVN have plans for operations deeper into Cambodia?

Adm. Moorer: Yes, they have plans for defending Phnom Penh and Kompong Som.

Dr. Kissinger: Are we satisfied with these plans?

Adm. Moorer: Yes.

Mr. Johnson: The paper suggests that we might be able to use a naval blockade to prevent enemy use of Kompong Son. With a hostile Cambodian Government, I don't think we can assume that we could mount a blockade. In extremis we might want to hold the port of Kompong Som as an alternative to a blockade.

Mr. Schlesinger: There must be areas along the coast where the communists could get supplies in by lighter even if they didn't have the use of Kompong Som. Wouldn't it be necessary to hold the whole littoral?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Dr. Kissinger: That would be the absolute minimum that we would need to hold.

I tend toward Dave's (Packard's) view that we should ask for a supplemental. If Mel Laird can convince the President that it is feasible, none of us will oppose. It is a political judgment.

Mr. Schlesinger: Congress may pick and choose in considering any supplemental request we submit. We may not get exactly what we want and may have to rearrange the funds later.

Dr. Kissinger: The next step is for Laird to explain to the President why he thinks

he can get a supplemental through Congress. Then we will need a memo from State and OMB on how we can keep going at the present level, pending a supplemental. We also need a paper on what we should do if we decide to submit a request for a supplemental later.

(to Smith) You should prepare the charts relating the growth in FANK capabilities and the need for ARVN support over time. You can work with CIA on making a plausible assessment of reinforcements the enemy might send into the area. JCS can help in putting together projections on the growth of Cambodian capabilities.

With these papers we will be ready for another meeting.

Mr. Schlesinger: Wouldn't it be desirable to define what we consider to be the optimal strategy? That is, we should state that our goal is to maintain control of the key areas of the country, including the capital, the port, and the populated areas; to rely on indigenous forces to the maximum extent possible; and to have recourse in necessity to South Vietnamese forces.